



PLEASE REFER TO THE SOCIETY'S PREVIOUS SUBMISSIONS, DATED THE 17TH MAY 2023 AND 29TH SEPTEMBER 2023.

THE FRIENDS OF LEWES CONCLUSIONS ON THE FURTHER SPECIFIC AMENDMENTS TO THE PHOENIX PLANNING APPLICATION DATED DECEMBER 2023: -

THE FRIENDS OF LEWES MAINTAIN THEIR OBJECTIONS TO THIS PROPOSAL FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS: -

PART 'A': OVERALL CONCLUSIONS: -

(1) The Society's previous submissions highlighted a number of concerns that it considered essential to be considered in further detail. Having studied the amendments to the original planning proposals and the most recent changes, the Friends of Lewes continue to have strong objections to many aspects of the planning application, and is disappointed that a number of our concerns have not been adequately addressed.

(2) There is an absence of clarity on the nature of the recent changes to an application which now comprises some 1981 documents plans and comments. The absence of this transparency on this important planning application leaves uncertainty as to which of the plans and documents in the current submission are still operative and relevant and which have been superseded making it difficult for organisations and individuals to comment in a meaningful way. Indeed, no attempt has been made by the applicant to guide third parties through the changes, none of which are considered to be 'material' to the overall scheme.

(3) Particular elements of the Master Plan have proved to be very restrictive and have severely limited the ability of the proposed scheme to make any significant changes. Nothing has been proposed to address the relationship of the development to heritage assets bordering the development. Indeed, the plans increasingly reflect a 'stand-alone' development with no integration with the rest of the town.

(4) From an Urban Design Perspective, the Society would have expected a project of this scale to have been fully integrated with the existing built form of Lewes and to have included specific initiatives to be implemented at an early stage along two 'key' boundaries, namely the frontage to Phoenix Causeway and along the river frontage between Phoenix Causeway and the proposed new bridge across the river in the vicinity of the Tesco supermarket.

(5) Indeed, the Society considers the absence of a new river crossing together with the provision of the proposed raised 'Belvedere' river walkway, incorporating a new pedestrian / cycle route through the site could possibly jeopardise the anticipated speed of the 'modal shift' from private car use to increased walking / cycling trips.

(6) The Society notes that part of the detailed planning application relates to the construction of an access road directly off the Phoenix Causeway for construction purposes, which in the longer term would be used as the main access to the mobility hub. However, the Society understands that the construction of the mobility hub has now been brought forward, which suggests that it may indeed have to have its own separate point of access in order to permit the ‘construction’ traffic to continue to operate independently in order to avoid any traffic having to circulate through the Conservation Area.

(7) The Society considers that the significance of climate change now needs to be carefully taken into account when considering any proposed housing development on a floodplain.

(8) In the absence of being able to assess similar schemes that have already been completed by Human Nature, the Society has reservations about the successful implementation of this large scale and very ambitious scheme at such an important site abutting the historic core of Lewes.

PART ‘B’: DETAILED CONCLUSIONS: -

(1) In the wide range of amendments that have been made to this proposal by the applicant, the emphasis appears to have been focused on adjustments to the detailing of the individual ‘parcels’ of development or the relationship of individual ‘blocks’ within these parcels, rather than addressing the need to ensure that this significant development fully integrates within both its immediate setting and the rest of Lewes.

(2) The Society considers that it is essential that a scheme of this size integrates well with its immediate surroundings. In this respect, both the ‘edge’ of the development and the provision of any ‘key’ links with the surrounding built form, are considered to be essential items in achieving a successful addition to Lewes.

(3) In terms of an important ‘edge’ that needs to be considered carefully, and in some detail, is the relationship of the proposed development to Phoenix Causeway. The Society has had a long-standing concern about the location of the proposed ‘Mobility Hub’, effectively a multi-storey car park, and its likely physical appearance directly fronting the Phoenix Causeway and how this structure could make a ‘positive impact’ at this important location at the entrance to Lewes, which the applicant has yet to address. This concern is reinforced by the detail on plan 1249-EXP-5001 PO3 which shows the mobility hub just a few metres from the edge of the carriageway with seemingly insufficient room for more than a single vehicle to queue and accommodate the two 3.5m wide pedestrian and cycleway routes proposed, let alone any landscaping to replace the lost TPO trees.

(4) The Society therefore objects to the proposed ‘Mobility Hub’ directly fronting Phoenix Causeway as the scale and massing are considered to be totally inappropriate at such a sensitive location at the entrance to the historic town. Furthermore, the Society considers that this building needs to be set back and screened from view. It would also be desirable to have other buildings at this location in order to provide a more ‘lively’ frontage as a basis for providing high quality public realm in this area.

(5) As a consequence, the Society objects to size and orientation of parcels 9 & 10 on the ‘parameter plan’, which would constrain further consideration of a successful interface between the proposed buildings and the Phoenix Causeway frontage, as a basis for achieving a high quality of public realm on this part of the site.

(6) A further concern along this significant 'edge' is the suggested location of three bus stops on the north side of Phoenix Causeway. In this context, the Society objects to the failure of the application to provide a suitable replacement bus station for Lewes within the existing town centre contrary to paragraph 3(j) of Strategic Site Policy SD57 of the South Downs Local Plan. The proposal for three new bus lay-bys on the northern side of the Phoenix Causeway, does not meet this policy requirement and would represent a poor quality and inappropriate development at the eastern gateway to the town. The ESCC requirement for two bus stops on the south side of Phoenix Causeway are not shown within the application site. Plan 7315-GA-011 Rev P06 shows that such bus stops will have an impact on further TPO trees, prevent a 3m segregated cycleway being provided from the original Wenban Smith exit road and which would also require the Waitrose retaining wall to be strengthened.

(7) The development fails to make re-provision for the three displaced coach parking spaces off North Street, (close to Rolland Gorringe), which are so important in providing for the needs of tourists and other visitors to the town.

(8) The Society objects to the overall design of the development proposed adjacent to Phoenix Causeway as it fails to respect and enhance the character of the town and does not deliver a high standard of design or recognise the high-quality built environment within the vicinity of the site adjacent to the Conservation Area. In this respect, the design is contrary to paragraph 3(d) of Strategic Site Policy SD57 of the South Downs Local Plan.

(9) As part of achieving the above objective, the Society objects to the proposed removal of all the existing trees fronting the northern side of the Phoenix Causeway, which are identified as being in good condition, and included in the two existing Tree Preservation Orders. A detailed plan is required, illustrating the position of all the trees and their root spread, in order to confirm whether there is a need for any specific trees to be felled in their entirety.

(10) The SDNPA's failure to give proper consideration to the impacts of the Santon development on these trees, and the new buildings having been built in the interim at Phoenix Place on land cleared for the Santon development, means that the Santon development is now incapable of implementation affecting the status of the TPO trees which cannot be felled without a further consent under the 'Hillside' and 'Pilkington' case law principles. This affects the status of the TPO trees which cannot be felled without a further consent. It is therefore incumbent on the Planning Authority to fully review the need to fell any of the TPO trees. In the absence of any justification for their felling, this important landscape feature of healthy trees should remain, with the access from Phoenix Causeway altered so that it is positioned between the existing trees.

(11) The society remain concerned that the applicant has not been able to show that there will be a 65% diversion away from car use by the inhabitants of the development or the other land uses. Given the loss of existing employment business from the site and the increasing reliance on countryside locations (see LW/23/0583 Plumpton Green and Bridge Farm Barcombe Mills) it does not seem realistic to assume private car usage can be reduced by such margins, something underlined by the 2011 Census to Work distribution with almost half Lewes residents working outside Lewes town.

(12) Related to car use the Society are concerned at the adequacy of the 310 car parking spaces to be provided in the 7 level (four storey) Co mobility hub with 106 permits allocated to residents of the proposed development. It is unclear if this will be adequate for 685 dwellings, 3,568 m² of business floorspace, the health centre, hotel, creative and community space, leisure uses,

restaurant/bar, retail and a day nursery. There will be insufficient space to absorb the 212 off-street parking spaces displaced and whilst ESCC have suggested a further 'failsafe' option to address a shortfall in targeted modal shift (with an additional storey on the Co-Mobility Hub delivered now or in the future) to deliver c.100 spaces, this is not part of the development as matters stand.

(13) The Society would like to see more specific evidence that the loss of the 212 public car parking spaces will be adequately replaced within the development so that the impacts on the commercial and retail vitality of the town are not harmed. No account seems to have been taken of the wider changes in the town centre with the intended removal by ESCC of 70 pay and display on-street spaces.

(14) It is noted that the existing controlled parking within the site will cease and new residents who wish to have a car will be able to purchase a permit to park in the proposed Co-Mobility Hub, if they meet the eligibility criteria. This should be clarified so that the potential for car parking to migrate into the town centre and surrounding areas is fully understood along with adequate compensation for the loss of Zone B on-street car parking spaces. At the same time there must be clarity on the ability of the health centre users to access the mobility hub.

(15) The society remain opposed to the loss of public rights of way through the site through the proposed stopping-up order. It has not been shown that this is reasonable or necessary, with ambiguity remaining about the specific measures proposed. It is vitally important that access from the fire station remains unaltered to ensure emergency responses are not impeded. The recent fire in Waterloo Place highlighted the importance of rapid response and that every second counts.

(16) The Society **objects** to the lack of plans to integrate the development with the rest of Lewes and to reduce traffic circulating through the Conservation Area. The complex split access arrangements with separate access from Phoenix Place for ground floor Co-Mobility Hub users through the conservation area and the exclusion of a right turn from the original Wenban Smith Eastgate site/left turn for westerly Phoenix Causeway movements unnecessarily increases the volume of traffic using the one-way network via East Street compared to that which currently exists. Greater integration with the wider area could be achieved with a link to Lancaster Street for vehicles exiting the development wishing to go north towards Haywards Heath.

(17) Furthermore, vehicular users such as tradesman and those collecting /dropping off at the hotel, businesses or the health centre will have to enter through the conservation area one way system and then return through North Street and Little East Street to the mobility hub entrance for general users. With only a single car length available for queuing at the entrance to the mobility hub there are clear environmental, safety, the free flow of traffic and the cycle and pedestrian crossing points. The potential for collisions from the right turn of vehicles is a concern of ESCC from multiple shunts in Little East Street and also Phoenix Causeway. It is noted that traffic proposals have yet to have the benefit of the Stage 1 Road Safety Audit to support any of the proposals.

(18) The Society notes that the concerns raised by ESCC highways in terms of the ability to reduce traffic speeds below the 20mph limit and related matters. The applicants proposed wide spread use of extensive road marking / hatching and coloured surface finishes is not considered acceptable within the conservation area and will not protect or enhance surface its character. As with the Santon scheme all such traffic calming should be through hard landscape works using appropriate pavers and other materials.

(19) The Society requests that the phasing of the mobility hub and Thomas Paine Bridge are included in an early phase so that these elements are available to secure the vital modal shift identified in the

application. These are essential in terms of providing a 'key' link, (referred to in paragraph 2 above), of integrating the proposed development with the existing built form to the north of the River Ouse. This is essential in order to promote an improved link for both pedestrians and cyclists, and to encourage the 'modal shift' of relying on the use of cars for shopping.

(20) The Society continues to support the Detailed Planning Application for Temporary Access to the site from Phoenix Causeway, subject to its alignment being between the two Tree Preservation Orders, in order to limit the felling of any trees to a minimum. It remains unclear how the temporary construction access will operate alongside the early provision of the mobility hub given the importance of the hub's early construction and the ten-year phased construction period. This conflict must be resolved to show that the Phoenix Causeway construction access will remain useable throughout the period of possible works, supported by fully detailed drawings.

(21) The Society objects to the proposed access arrangements for pedestrians and cyclists to and from the proposed development, having not only to cross Phoenix Causeway, but also to rely on the use of Eastgate Street, which is currently only one way. In this respect the proposals fail to demonstrate that paragraph 3(b) of Strategic Site Policy SD57 of the South Downs Local Plan has been met or opportunities for active travel pursued. In this context, it is suggested that the applicant needs to engage with East Sussex County Council, as the local Highway Authority, to access the possible impact of this proposal on the wider street network. The development must include a shared pathway for use by pedestrians and cyclists to meet Policy SS4 of the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan extending beneath Phoenix Causeway to its south side.

(22) The Society considers that the proposed development will have an unacceptable impact on both the town and its wider landscape setting within the South Downs National Park, whose Local Plan is seeking to achieve "landscape" led initiatives in relation to the implementation of new developments.

(23) The Society considers that the layout and form of the development is largely unchanged and will still materially harm the setting to several heritage assets and the conservation area. Upon the limited information available, the proposals are not shown to be landscape led, or by their scale and form, be able to sustain the character and appearance of the Lewes Conservation Area, both protecting views and its interaction with the surrounding downland.

(24) The principle of moving the health centre to Phoenix Causeway is supported. Although the planned flood defences will reduce the risk of flooding, it will not be eliminated and its new position next to the River Ouse will remain vulnerable to flooding. The health centre will be the sole primary health care facility (including the only doctor's surgery) serving Lewes, and should not be located in the floodplain next to the Ouse. It should be built on higher ground, preferably with its own dedicated car park at ground level for the sole use of key workers and its patients with accessibility needs. It is noted that the toilets and café are reliant on their building and provision within the health hub.

(25) In the light of recent flooding in Oct 2023 and January 2024, the Society no longer supports development in the flood plain unless flood defences are provided to heights to defend against a flood with a 0.5% Annual Event Probability (1 in 200-year event) including future climate change allowances for the next 100 years. The proposed application does not protect to these levels and furthermore uses a flawed flood model that has not even used the latest published climate change allowances for flooding from the River Ouse.

(26) Storm Babet in October 2023 saw flooding of 400 properties in Derbyshire after flood defences that were built in 2012 were overtopped. The government's response to Storm Henk, in January 2024, which caused significant flooding from the River Trent in Nottinghamshire, was to call for Local Authorities to do more to scrutinise planning applications for development in the flood plain.

(27) The Society objects to the use of the lower H+ sea level rise allowance. Approximately 700 new houses must be considered a 'significant urban extension', which require the higher H++ sea level rise allowances to be used.

(28) The Surface water drainage design is considered unacceptable with a surface water pumping station provision that will not meet the standards for adoption by Southern Water. This will impose high maintenance costs onto the site's home owners via the proposed management company. Infrastructure for a development of 700 units must be provided up front and be adopted by Southern Water to ensure it is maintained by an experienced and competent organisation.

(29) The Society continues to support the Detailed Planning Application for part of the housing development on the northern part of the site, but is still concerned about the excessive height of the edge of the development fronting the open country on the most north-western part of the site.

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